The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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Under the Stars.

O youth, rose-crowned, yet full of strife,
Craving uncomprehended joys,
Hearing the desperate fight of life
But as a far-off pleasant noise.
Come, ere on thy bold way thou start,
While not a cloud thy future mars,
And still that wildly-beating heart
Under the stars.

O stormy prime, so beautiful
With fierce delight, ecstatic pain;
Spending and being spent: no lull;
No rest; no count of loss or gain;
Ere with tired feet thou come to tread
The blood-stained field of ended wars;
Pause—bow the glories of thy head
Under the stars.

O heavy time of brows discrowned,
And hanging heads and feeble knees,
With piteous pale ghosts haunted round,
And longings for impossible ease.
Nay, beat no more like wounded bird
Against fate's iron prison bars;
When all sounds cease, God's voice is heard
Under the stars.

Soon, soon will come the Supreme hour
When like a painted show life seems,
Or perfume of remembered flower,
Or dear dead faces seen in dreams.
Clasp hands beneath the silent night
That hushes all these mortal jars;
God, thou alone art Love—and Light—
Beyond the stars!

What is the good of being able to say that you are at home in the best circles of society, if you are not at home with God?—*J. K. Pike.*

Faith.

BY THE REV. W. E. ADDIS, M.A.

"The just man shall live by faith."—Gal. iii. 2.

It is not uncommon to confuse faith with credulity, and so the darkest times in the history of Christendom, the times when Christianity was deeply affected by the barbarism and heathenism with which it was struggling and which it finally overcame, have been called the ages of faith. Now, if we look at nations and conditions of society in which faith of this kind flourishes, if we identify faith with that kind of belief which finds nothing too extravagant or irrational, there is one characteristic which cannot fail to strike the thoughtful observer. Such faith does not, as a rule, depend on the free choice of the individual: it arises by a sort of necessity. This, for example, is the case with those races of mankind which have not risen above nature worship. Every savage believes that the spirits of the dead, the spirits of the storm and the rain and the thunder, of the forest and the waterfall, are present realities. It cannot be said that such belief triumphs over scepticism for the simple reason that belief has no scepticism to encounter. It is much the same when men have advanced to a higher stage in nature worship, and for a vague belief in spirits substitute a belief in gods and goddesses who preside over nature and society. Thus the Homeric Greek, without the least difficulty, conceived of gods made in his own image. He could picture them as easily almost as he could picture his fellow men. After all, the deities whom he worshipped were men

and women like himself, save that they were men and women of noblest mould, and were built on a larger scale. Their office, too, was easily understood. It consisted in maintaining the material world in which man had his own being, and that amount of morality which men were forced to accept, as the very condition of their intercourse with each other. Religion made no attempt to lift man above the world. It maintained the pious worshipper in the world and blessed him with wealth and success in battle, and length of days, and sons to bury his body, and perform the rites which set the State at rest, and to continue his name when he was gone. Hence it was long before anyone questioned the existence of gods so natural and so naturally taken for granted, as the hidden causes of the things which were seen and felt. The real difficulty, and to some extent the real virtue, lay in disbelief—not in belief. It was by the slow growth of reason and of morality that people recognised at last the difficulty of adhering to the worship of gods which represented imperfect and barbarous views of the world and of man, from which the more cultivated classes had already emerged. Nor is it true by any means that Christian populations are exempt from the tendency conspicuous in early forms of religion. It never occurs to the Calabrian peasant that his trust in a miraculous image or a patron saint may be mistaken. He believes because he cannot help believing, and he asks, with a confidence which never wavers, for a blessing on his grain and his flocks, safety from the lightning or the plague. Nay, we may come nearer home. The same phenomenon repeats itself in all our Protestant Churches. We are all prone to the tendency which has been described. Men inherit a mass of beliefs in Holy Scripture for example or in the Creeds. Sometimes with a formalism which is no whit the better they repeat set phrases about the unity and fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. No doubt, wherever the gospel of Christ is preached, there are glimmerings of a higher ideal. It is true, nevertheless, that we may think ourselves religious and profess to be Christians, while all the time the belief which we hold is not our own. We have never made it our own; we have never tested its reality by our own spiritual experience. Our belief is easy, partly because it is mere acquiescence, partly because it is worldly. We have no hunger and thirst after righteousness, no thirst for communion with that living God who is himself the supreme righteousness and the infinite love. We do not seek to be delivered from the world and to overcome it. On the contrary, we think of religion, when we think of it at all, as of a force which maintains present order and promises the prolongation of natural blessings in a world beyond the grave.

The faith of which St. Paul speaks is the very opposite of that ready and spontaneous belief which up to this point has occupied our attention. Christian faith does not fall below educated reason but transcends it, in this sense that it is at once the highest and harmonious exercise of the reason, of the will, and of the spiritual affections or desires. Far from flourishing on the soil of ignorance and on the low levels of morality, it is only possible when the sense of individual personality has attained considerable stature. Instead of being inevitable it allows, say rather demands, the free and deliberate choice of the will, corresponding to, submitting itself to, making itself one with the holy and loving will of God. Nor is it ever universal. It belongs only to men of good-will, *i.e.*, to those who have the requisite moral dispositions, and to whom God reveals himself, not as he reveals himself to the world, but as he reveals himself to his own. So it came that St. Paul, like all the heroes of faith, had to swim against the stream. That faith which he preached was to the bigoted Jews a stumbling-block, to the refined Greeks it was foolishness. But unlike the credulity of ignorant times, unlike the merely intellectual theories popular among the wise men of the world, faith, as St. Paul understood it, changed the whole nature; it was, aye it is, the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. For the present we may leave out of sight the special manner in which this faith was coloured by St. Paul's history and surroundings. We shall confine ourselves to faith in its essence, to faith as the source of all religion which is pure and reasonable and spiritual.

Faith then, as St. Paul uses the word, means trust, and it implies first of all trust in our own nature, as that of free, because spiritual, beings. To put the same thing in different words, faith springs from trust in our own personality. Try

to think what personality means. If we look at ourselves from the lower side, we find that we stand on the same level with the universe of material things. They are not free, neither are we. We are born, we grow, we decay and die, just as the plants and animals around us do. Our heart beats and after a little span ceases to beat without any choice of our own. We are parts of a mighty whole, and our petty life is controlled by the larger life of the universe. Even our minds are to some extent subject to external law. We inherit the good or evil legacy of inclinations which have come down to us through the long course of ages. The society into which we have been born set the impress of its stamp upon us, before we were aware. At every moment we draw the breath from the intellectual and moral atmosphere in which we are placed. Thoughts visit us and enter into our minds and dwell there without any exercise of will on our part. Were this all, there would be no room for faith. But it is not all. There is a loftier side to our nature and, as viewed from that side, we do not form part of the universe, but stand over against it. It does not contain us, but we contain it, holding space and time within our thought. Moreover, we have the knowledge of an immaterial good, of a good with a value out of all proportion to that of the things which are apprehended by the senses We know that right is right. Nor only so : we feel the impulse which leads us to make this higher good our own. We recognise the fact that because right is right, to follow right were wisdom in the scorn of consequence. A new vista opens before the eye of the soul. There is a new possibility, seen afar off as yet, but surely seen, the possibility of rising above the world, the possibility of planting our feet above the tide of time and space on the rock of the moral law. We look up to a city which has eternal foundations and which is governed by laws which do not depend on the public opinion of the hour, but are eternal in the heavens. It is not at once that men rise to this exalted sphere of moral freedom and individual responsibility. It is but the germ of such capacity which displays itself in the child or the savage. When, however, this stage is reached, man recognises, or can recognise, his true nature as a personal or spiritual being and in this knowledge of himself faith strikes root. Religion may and does reach us by revelation from without. "God having spoken in many portions and in many ways to the fathers by the prophets, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us by his Son." But till the truth revealed from without finds a home within the heart and becomes a matter of personal experience, it does not yet deserve the name of faith. It is only "in the spirit" that we can "have access" through Christ to the Father.

This thought of our own personality throws its light backwards and forwards. Backwards, for in itself nature is a non-moral power. It punishes a blunder as surely as it avenges a crime, or, in strict accuracy, it takes no notice of a crime, except so far as it is a blunder. The innocent and the guilty it consumes alike. But the constant course of creation, call it evolution if you will, has been preparing the way for man, a being personal and free and therefore capable of moral life. Since that is so, nature is seen to supply the conditions out of which, or rather, perhaps, in which, moral being rises above the horizon Therefore nature itself, non-moral no longer, turns out to be the instrument of morality, because the production of free moral beings is the goal to which nature tends. As the light of our personality falls back on the past, so it stretches forward into the future. For the moral law which speaks within, points to duties without. No man can live unto himself alone and his moral perfection is inseparable from that of others. "We are members one of another." To fulfil his destiny, man has to change and transfigure nature. He has to give his bodily strength and his powers of mind to the service of the weak. He has to make his wealth the minister of righteousness and of mercy and of love. He has to reverse the law which exterminates the weak by that higher law which comes to seek and to save them. In short it is his to put morality into material things and to promote the kingdom of righteousness on earth.

Once more, just when conscious of his inborn freedom, man feels the limits of his freedom and the failure of his efforts after goodness. "The good which I would, that I do not: the evil which I would not, that I do."—That personality of ours, which is a mystery to ourselves points upwards to a power beyond, and above.

The power to which it points is a power above, else the voice of conscience could not make itself heard in tones so awful. It is a power which makes for righteousness, for it has implanted in the soul with a thirst for moral good and has made man such that he can find his freedom not in arbitrary caprice but only in subjection to the moral law. The will cannot exercise its freedom, till it has been redeemed from wilfulness. It is a power which makes for righteousness, because it enables man to make evil itself the stepping-stone to higher good. Hitherto, I have spoken of a power which makes for righteousness and have said that "it" does this or that. We may now dismiss all such language as miserably inadequate. Righteousness has no meaning in the case of an unconscious power, for righteousness consists in the right direction of the will, so that if intellect and will be lacking, there can be no question of righteousness or unrighteousness. Therefore, man's free and moral nature, therefore man's personality postulates the personality of God. The consideration of our own nature has lifted us up step by step, till we are alone on the Mount with God. He is the living God who has never left Himself without a witness. He has revealed his nature in the whole history of mankind. He made himself known in Judah, his name was great in Israel and when the fulness of time was come, he gave the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But besides this, as the condition without which all else would be in vain, he reveals his personality in and through yours and mine. He gives us the pledge of his indwelling spirit and conveys therewith the assurance that righteousness and love are the motive forces of his power and providence. He makes us partakers of his nature and bids us walk in love "as dear children." When by a free act of the will we surrender ourselves to God in Christ, when we trust him for ourselves, for others, for the world, for the life that now is, for the fuller life to come, that is faith. God is one with us and we with him. This faith does not withdraw us from the world. It points to our duties there and thus enables us to overcome the world. It unites us to the order of the world, it sets us free from the trammels of the world.

The origin of faith discloses its profoundly moral character. The judgments formed in mathematics leave no freedom to him who has followed the reasoning by which they are proved, be his character what it may. So again sciences less exact and historical investigation, demand patient inquiry, disciplined judgment, acuteness of observation, but they make no claim on the deeper qualities of the heart. Nay, the same be said with some modification about the philosophic presentation of God as the first cause or as the substance which underlies all appearance, the essential being compared with which things seen are but types and shadows. Faith travels along another road and rests in conclusions very different from those of the philosophical thirst. It begins with the estimation of moral goodness as the thing of incomparable worth. It is perfected by the surrender of self to him who is the supreme righteousness and love which encompasses all. It does not with the speculative Greek "think that there are gods." It does not merely with the theist believe that God is. No. It believes in God. It rests in him. Thus it is the pure in heart who see God. It is those who love, that abide in God and God in them. And on the other hand, if we consider money, or intellectual gifts, or rank and social success, the chief thing and give goodness quite a secondary place, it is small marvel that we find faith impossible. "How can ye believe," says the Saviour of the world, which receive glory one of another and the glory which cometh from the only God ye seek not?"

Notice, in conclusion, the infinite mercy and love with which God, if we do but suffer him the Almighty, makes himself known to us. It might have seemed presumption to suppose that God's care watches over each one of us singly, so that the very hairs of our head are numbered. Yet if it had not been that God cares for each one of us singly, we should never have known him at all in that practical manner which constitutes the life of faith and the soul of Christ's religion. Through our own individual and incommunicable personality he addresses us one by one. He who first loved us, deigns to ask us for our love in return, and draws us with the cords of love and with the bonds of a man.

Midland Christian Union.

We have to congratulate our friends on the success of the annual gathering of the tribes. The assembly was attended by about sixty ministers and delegates; seventy-five sat down to luncheon provided by the Old Meeting Church and 120 attended the afternoon conference, and the same number remained to tea. A good congregation assembled in the evening to hear Mr. Addis. The proceedings of the day were marked by a great deal of enthusiasm. One jarring note must be regretted—the heat which was imported into the discussion on Mr. Tarrant's paper—or rather into the discussion *after* the paper on a side issue—the definition of a Free Church. Never was a red-herring more successfully drawn across the scent, and Mr. Tarrant's paper received but scant attention. This was a pity, as the paper itself was a most thoughtful production. Perhaps until we are agreed upon some definition of a Free Church which shall not exclude Baptist and Congregational Churches from that category, we had better not seek their help in fighting our School Board battles! Below will be found a detailed report of the meetings.

On Monday, March 12th, the various annual gatherings of the Midland Christian Union and Provincial Assembly were held in Birmingham. On the previous day—"Assembly Sunday"—there was a general exchange of pulpits by the ministers belonging to the Union, and special sermons were preached.

Monday's meetings were held at the Old Meeting Church. The roll was called at midday, and there was hardly a congregation within the Union that was not represented by minister and laymen.—The Rev. Joseph Wood presided.—The Rev. A. A. Charlesworth read the annual report, which recorded with satisfaction the establishment, after the last annual meeting, of a new mission in Little Green Lanes Board School, Small Heath, and expressed the confidence of the committee that at no distant date the venture would become a prosperous church. The year had been memorable for its great griefs. Death had been busy, and had carried off some of the noblest, most trusted, and best beloved of their friends, among them Dr. Crosskey, Sir Thomas Martineau, and Mr. Herbert New. The committee also noted with regret the deaths of Mr. C. W. S. Deakin and Mr. Hugh Nettlefold. The accounts showed the total receipts of the year to have amounted to £494 14s. 8½d. (including £37 brought forward). The balance in hand was now £26 9s. 5½d.—The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the report, spoke of the great loss which the Union had suffered in the deaths of the Rev. Dr. Crosskey and Sir Thomas Martineau, and said that, notwithstanding these griefs, there was something for joy and gladness in their gathering together that day. The report, while not quite so satisfactory in some respects as they had hoped, nevertheless gave much encouragement. They opened last year a new chapter in the history of the Midland Christian Union. The committee had had under consideration the necessity of doing something for Church Extension in Birmingham. Prior to last year the Union had devoted itself entirely to work in the neighbouring district; nothing had ever been done by the Union for Birmingham; the wants of the city had been left to the care of the local churches, which had provided more than £500 a year for missions in Birmingham. The commitee, however, considered that the time had come for the Union to take some steps for further work in the city, and the result had been the starting of the new mission at Small Heath. The great bulk of the work done by the Union was in aid of the weaker churches who could not hold their own in the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves placed. The more he learnt the more he was amazed at the enthusiasm of the ministers who were called to work in circumstances and under conditions which were, generally speaking, most depressing. He wished he could have the ear of the laymen with regard to the position of certain churches and ministers. It had been brought home to him in sad ways that the actual privations which some of their ministers underwent in connection with their work were such as ought to make them heartily ashamed of themselves, of their denomination, and of the scanty help given to them.—Mr. Fellows, a layman of Wolverhampton, seconded the motion, and spoke in favour of a more aggressive spirit being shown by the Unitarians, in his own town especially.—The reports were adopted.—The Rev. J. C. Street moved a vote of thanks to the officers for the

year.—Mr. Russell seconded this, and it was agreed to.—Rev. J. Crossley, the late secretary, replied, and thanked his brother officers for the help which they had given him during his tenure of the assistant ministry at the Church of the Messiah.—The Rev. R. Davis proposed the re-appointment of the Rev. Joseph Wood as president, of the vice-presidents, the committee, and the Rev. A. Worthington as treasurer, and the election of the Rev. A. A. Charlesworth as secretary.—The Rev. E. Myers (Shrewsbury) seconded the motion, which was passed.—Mr. George Titterton moved a resolution calling upon the friends of social and religious liberty to use their best endeavours to frustrate the demands now being made in the London School Board and many other directions to introduce dogmatic and sectarian teaching into the national schools —(applause). The demands were made, he said, in that same spirit of ecclesiasticism which carried on the Star Chamber and passed the "Five Mile Act." "Those theological fossils on the London School Board" proposed to call upon the teachers to instruct the children attending the schools in the doctrine of the Trinity, in spite of the protest of the minority of the members and of the whole body of teachers. They in Birmingham, who had been to a large extent successful in the fight for freedom, ought to offer their sympathy to their London brethren, for the demand now being made was contrary to the principle of political and religious freedom. If the teaching proposed were allowed, it would mean an inquisition sooner or later into the belief of the teachers, and from them to the children themselves.—The Rev. Mr. Myers narrated some of his experiences on the Shrewsbury School Board, where the Apostles' Creed had been admitted as a basis of teaching. The children were examined upon it, and were asked questions on the Three Persons of the Trinity. A similar result would follow in London if the proposed circular were issued and the majority pursued their present course unchecked. He suggested that the Education Department should be urged to ask the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown as to the legality of the proposed London circular. He believed it would be found to be an infringement of the Temple-Cowper clause. If it were it would be illegal. If not, they would know what action they had to take—(hear, hear). The resolution was carried with applause.

Afterwards a luncheon took place at the Colonnade Hotel, when the toasts of "The British and Foreign Unitarian Association" was proposed by the Rev. J. Wood, and acknowledged by the Rev. W. G. Tarrant (London); and "The Old Meeting Church," proposed by the Rev. J. C. Street, and replied to by Lieutenant-General Phelps.

THE "PRIESTLY" IDEAL AND THE FREE CHURCHES.

In the afternoon a conference was held in the schools of the Old Meeting Church—the Rev. J. Wood presiding—to hear a paper by the Rev. W. G. Tarrant upon "Present Day Priests and the Free Churches."—More than twenty years ago, he said, Matthew Arnold in his own light and supercilious way counselled all dissenters to give up their dissent and enter the one National Church. To that appeal Dr. Martineau replied with a defence of the Nonconformist position. Dr. Martineau said that so long as its sacramental principle remained, the Established Church rested upon a theory of religion utterly at variance with the residuary varieties of Puritan faith, and leaning to a reversal of the very essences of Christianity. It intercepted that immediateness of religion between the human spirit and the Divine, which was the distinctive boon of Jesus to the world. And it re-instated that resort to mediation and "channels of grace" and magically-endowed men which it was His especial aim to sweep away and render impossible. It could not be denied that the opposition between these two conceptions was fundamental; that it justified the protest of the Puritans and the Quakers against the Church of Andrewes, Lord, and Parker. And why not our prolonged resistance, seeing that not one pretension of prelacy had been withdrawn? In Dr. Martineau's words we found our own position admirably described. The quarter of a century which had nearly elapsed had emphasised the pretensions of the Church. He could quote passages from books which had obtained a very wide currency—such as "Lux Mundi"—shewing that the priestly ideal had never been more clearly aimed at than at the present day. He believed that reunion between the schools of thought really represented

by the priestly Church on one side and the Free Churches on the other was impossible, for grant that any series of men, however honourable or naturally powerful, possessed, as Bishops, a supernatural claim, and the essential principle of the Free Church ideal must be given up at once. They could not expect that men who truly believed themselves to possess a peculiar spiritual power in virtue of their place in the Church—a power which belonged to the humblest priest, but which no Spurgeon, or Dale, or Martineau could wield—should lightly admit outsiders to equality with them. At a reunion conference in Switzerland, it was urged as a trifling concession to be granted by Nonconformists that they should recognise the Episcopate!—(laughter)—and receive some sort of ordination! That was the crux of the position. There could be no reunion. It was wiser to recognise this. It was no use crying "peace!" when there was no peace. While the Free Churches were busy seeking new truth and shaking off childish things of tradition, the priests, secure in a faith long defined, were employed in devising methods for swaying the affection of the people and for maintaining the immense social prestige which clung about the Establishment. They were making a great effort to secure the National funds for their schools, and to rule the destinies of the Board Schools of the people was but one part of their great campaign. What had the Free Churches to offer? They had some things which were valuable, and to which they might add immeasurably if they would. They had freedom to believe and freedom to teach. In other words they might say they feared God, and feared no one else. It was a great boon to be liberated from the tyranny of men. The Free Churches had a glorious liberty, and they permitted the fullest growth intellectually, the widest interpretation of sacred duties, the calmest outlook upon this world, with its thousand varieties of conscientious belief. What had any man to gain by joining the Free Churches? They knew what he would get when he went to the priest, and they were not afraid to challenge comparison with their teaching. In joining the Established Church he would step into a well-organised social movement, and that counted for something—for a great deal. It was true that men ought to be swayed only by what was true. But it was easier for a man to belong to a church which was "established," and had great traditions and systems, than to a church which had a minister only here and there throughout the land. The upholders of the priestly system were busy and in earnest. They had on their side numbers, tradition, wealth, devotion, and, it might be added, the tendency of the people to accept dogmas that seemed authoritative, and to take their religion easy. The Free Churches, divided into groups on points of doctrine or government, necessarily lacked the feeling of belonging to one great system which the Churchman possessed. If the Free Churches were to compete with the Priest Church they must make towards a deeper feeling of unity. The priest party reposed their faith upon the authority of a miraculously-guaranteed order of men; the Free Churches in the degree that they were free rested upon the individual conscience. Every Free Church ought to make special efforts to counterbalance as far as it could some of the enormous advantages possessed by the present Church. If it could not offer a miraculous guarantee of safety for the next world it ought to offer the substantial benefit of a true home of religious life helping towards actual salvation here. The point at issue was whether or not the religious hope of their people was to be held back by men who made assumptions of miraculous powers, and who looked down upon all others as, at best, unchartered interlopers in a field which they claimed exclusively as their own. Could it be doubted that any such pretensions must end in developing anew the priestly arrogance which had left the darkest stains on the page of Christian history, and that it must provoke a re-action here like that in those countries where the Romish priests had had full sway for generations? The Free Churches had their responsibility laid upon them at once and always to strengthen the religious life of the land. The priestly system had its ideal of a corporate church militant into which the lowliest of its members was enrolled. Every Free Church, their Church, should have its ideal of corporate life also, and seek to make the ideal actual—(applause).

A discussion on the paper then took place. It hung largely upon the question "What is a Free Church?" Mr. G. Basnett said that the reader of the paper appeared to apply his remarks to the Church of England; but the Congrega-

tionalists, and the Baptists, and others, in their way, were as narrow as the Church of England in their ideas about religion theologically considered. They had one example of this lately in the attempt to exclude the whole body of the Unitarians, and even members of the Church of the Saviour from the new Evangelical Free Church Council.—Mr. R. Clarke recommended them to carry on a vigorous warfare against Protestant dissent as represented by all Churches not Unitarian. He protested against Mr. Tarrant coming there and describing Free Churches as if in that great communion there were other churches besides Unitarian.—The Rev. Priestley Evans said that that meant that they would oppose those Churches because they did not hold their (Unitarian) opinions. But it was not a question of opinion, of theology: it was a question of sacerdotalism. The orthodox Nonconformist Churches claimed the name of "Free Church." Had they a right to it? Some of them had, because their trust deeds were free. The sense in which Mr. Tarrant had used the word "Free" was not from a theological point of view, but from a sacerdotal point of view. They could not place the priest between the soul and its God.—The Rev. E. Myers spoke of the difference between the Roman Church and the English Church. The Roman Church distinctly and definitely declared its power and was consistently sacerdotal. It declared its authority and showed it, but the Church of England had no authority—(hear, hear). It had no Pope. It had the ultimate decision of a Court of Law; but a Court of Law was not a religious authority. The Church of England had no infallibility; its power logically discovered rested with the individual who had to read the Bible and put his own constructions upon its teachings. The Church of England was thus not consistent in its sacerdotalism. At present Unitarians must suffer persecution, but the time was coming when all those who were outside the sacerdotal Church would be drifting surely towards the position which they held, and it was a mere matter of time when the two divisions of Christendom would be the centre of sacerdotalism as held by the Roman Church on one hand, and the centre of freedom of conscientious convictions on the other hand as held by the Unitarians—(applause).—The Rev. John Dale spoke in support of the recognition of orthodox Nonconformist Churches as Free Churches.—The Rev. Joseph Wood said he had listened to some extraordinary things that afternoon. The absolute ignorance displayed as to other Nonconformists was to him something astounding. If Dr. Dale were there he would say that there was not a word which had been said about freedom of thought and absolute toleration and the right of free judgment which did not belong to him. They had to recognise that the title "Free Church" did not belong exclusively to the Unitarians.—(oh.) It belonged to other people before it belonged to them. Having been brought up a Congregationalist, he declared that the Congregational churches were in the main as free as the Unitarian churches—("No" and "Yes.") It did not follow that their conclusions were the only conclusions compatible with freedom. He very much deprecated their saying that the other Nonconformist Churches were not free churches, and he contended that they were equally free with them—(no.) Gentlemen shook their heads who had never been in a Congregational church. He always found that those people were the surest who knew the least—(laughter). He did not know of any denomination in England which had so little knowledge of its neighbours as the Unitarians—(Oh, oh).—Mr. Myers said that the Chairman was labouring under a terrible mistake. His contention was that the Unitarian was the most consistent Free Church. If the Congregationalists were as free as the Chairman would have them believe, how was it they would have nothing to do with the Unitarians?—The Chairman: It has nothing to do with their freedom. They are free to do without us, and we are free to do without them. He added that freedom did not come in because Mr. Cadbury or anybody else did not choose to invite him to take part in their work. There was no reason why they should arrogate to themselves the title of the only free churches in the land, as there were plenty of others besides.—A Delegate: Suppose Dr. Dale denied the Deity of Jesus Christ, he would be turned out to-morrow—(hear, hear).—The Chairman: Why would he be turned out? Because the majority of his congregation would be against him; and what is that but a free church? In free churches congregations had

their rights as well as ministers, and it was no infringement of freedom for a Trinitarian Church to decline the services of a minister who had become Unitarian. If I were to teach the doctrine of the Trinity I should be turned out—("No, no," and laughter).—The Rev. A. A. Charlesworth said that there was much more freedom in the Church of England than was generally supposed. The Church of England, moreover, had what they to a large extent lacked—real vital enthusiasm for their belief. If they were filled more with the spirit of devotion which they found in the Church of England they would have a great accession of strength—(hear, hear).

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Tarrant for his visit and paper.

The Conference then adjourned to the lower schoolroom, where, by the hospitality of the Old Meeting Church, an excellent tea was provided.

The day's proceedings were brought to a very inspiring and impressive close by a special service in the Old Meeting Church.—The Rev. Priestley Evans conducted the service, and the Rev. W. E. Addis, of Nottingham, preached the sermon. The sermon will be found in full at the beginning of this number.

Historic Notes on Midland Churches.

No. V. PART II.

CRADLEY; PARK LANE CHAPEL, FORMERLY PENSETT MEETING-HOUSE.

On 2nd May, 1789, a letter was sent on behalf of the congregation to Mr. James Scott, "who had nearly completed his studies at Daventry," inviting him to succeed the Rev. Joseph Baker, as minister at Cradley. "Under a full conviction of the propriety of the measure," Mr. Scott cheerfully consented to comply with the invitation of the society, and preached for the first time as its minister on 21st June, 1789. He was ordained in the Pensett Meeting-House, on 11th May, 1790, in the presence of a numerous audience, the congregation at this time consisting of some 70 families. "Mr. Griffiths, of Wolverhampton, introduced the service with a short prayer, Mr. Carpenter, of Stourbridge, proposed the questions, Mr. Cole, formerly minister at Wolverhampton, conducted the ordination prayer, Mr. Scholefield, of Birmingham, delivered the charge from Titus ii. verse 1, Mr. Gentleman, of Kidderminster, preached from Romans xvi., verse 3, Mr. Amner, of Coseley, concluded with prayer, and Mr. Procter, of Oldbury, read the hymns. The other ministers present were Mr. Wood, of Dudley, Mr. Naylor, of Sheffield, Mr. Wood, of Rothwell, and Mr. Best, of Cradley." On the following Sunday standing to sing in public worship, a custom just then introduced at Stourbridge Presbyterian Chapel, was recommended and adopted at Pensett.

Early in the spring of 1794 the congregation contemplating the erection of a new place of worship, bought of John Brecknal the south angle of the field situated in the middle of the village of Netherend. The sum paid was £30. In the course of the summer the bricks were made upon the spot, and Mr. Brecknal dying soon afterwards, the society availed itself of an opportunity, which then occurred, of buying the remaining part of the field, for which an additional sum of £100 was paid. This land was conveyed and vested in the hands of the trustees of the old chapel at Pensett. On 24th April, 1795, Mr. Scott preached to his people from Nehemiah ii, verse 18:—"Let us rise up and build." In the course of this sermon he observed that the place in which they were assembled though not of great antiquity, was very slightly constructed. The pews in their decayed state could not be repaired without much expense. The society was frequently incommoded, and sometimes its worship disturbed by floods in the winter season, and convenient accommodation could not be obtained by all who wished to procure it. On Tuesday, 26th April, the first stone of the new chapel was laid in the presence of the trustees and all the children of the Charity school. The minister said, "May God prosper this humble attempt to promote His glory!" after which all present said "Amen." The building operations were superintended by Mr. Pargeter, of Foxcote. The closing service in Pensett Meeting-House was held on Sunday afternoon, 8th May, 1796, and on the following Sunday "the congregation of dissenters denominated Presbyterians, lately assembling at the chapel on Pensnett Chace, adjoining the hamlet of Cradley opened their newly-erected place of

worship, a structure in which elegant simplicity and convenience are judiciously united."—(*Protestant Dissenters' Magazine.*) Mr. Scott conducted the services, numerous congregations assembled, the Lord's Supper was administered in the morning, and "the afternoon service was introduced by six baptisms," and notice given that the chapel was duly registered.

The Pensett Meeting-House was sold for £160 to "a society of Mr. Wesley's Methodists," and the money appropriated by the trustees to the building of the Park Lane Chapel.

The first subscription list in 1795 towards building fund of the new chapel realised £312 0s. 6d., the second and final one in 1806 raised £247 15s. 6d., which with £100 "legacy of the late Mr. T. Pargeter, sen., of Foxcoate," £100 "saved from the income of Stalling's Estate," £160 "purchase money of Pensett," and some few other items made a total of £1020 3s. 6d., which "liquidated the building debt, thanks to the active exertions of Mr. J. Pargeter and the liberal contributions of the members and friends of the society."

From Mr. Scott's account of "the schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church," we learn that a Charity School was founded in 1746 for the education of 30 poor children. Mr. John Creswell, of Stourbridge, was at that time the principal benefactor, he annually subscribed the sum of £4 16s. 0d. "for the education of 12 children in this charity." This school was for some time conducted in a private house in Light Green. In 1753 a convenient building was erected for its accommodation in the village of Netherend (mainly through the benevolent exertions of Mr. Ab. Crane, of Halesowen, a member of the Established Church) which in 1791 was registered as a place of religious worship, occasional service being held there on Sunday evenings. In consequence of the death of various subscribers and other circumstances it was judged expedient to suspend this institution in 1788. It was revived in 1790 when two day schools were opened for the education of 30 boys and 20 girls. A Sunday school was established in 1788 in which 30 boys received instruction. In 1790 a Sunday school was opened for 20 girls. An annual sermon was preached on behalf of these schools, at that on 8th May, 1803, the Rev. J. Kentish preached for their support, "an unusual concourse of people were present. The Rev. W. Sutton, Vicar of Halesowen, attended, after an early service at his church, and expressed himself much pleased."

In 1807 the Rev. Benjamin Carpenter succeeded the Rev. Herbert Jenkins (died at Leicester, 23rd October, 1814) as minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Stourbridge, and at the same time became co-pastor with Mr. Scott at Cradley; an arrangement which continued with mutual satisfaction to ministers and people until Mr. Carpenter's death on 23rd November, 1816. Mr. Carpenter officiated alternately with Mr. Scott at Netherend and at Stourbridge. He had been the minister at Stourbridge from 1778 to 1795, when he removed to Clapham as co-pastor with Rev. Thomas Urwick. Three years afterwards he returned to live at Stourbridge as minister of the congregation then existing at Bromsgrove.

Mr. Scott's long and happy connection of 38 years with the Cradley congregation was only severed by his death on 19th December, 1827. As we shall see when we come to tell the story of the Lye Chapel, one of Mr. Scott's chief labours was the establishment of religious worship in that village. From 1807 until his death he was secretary to the monthly meeting of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of Warwickshire and neighbouring counties, which seems to have met for the first time at Cradley, on the occasion of his ordination, in May, 1790, followed by the second meeting there on 9th November next, when Rev. Richard Amner, of Coseley, preached from S Luke xvi., 1, and the assembled brethren afterwards discussed the question "Whether there is sufficient evidence that the gift of inspiration was given to a person of bad character?" For many years past the monthly meeting has been regularly held at Cradley on Easter Tuesday. In recording Mr. Scott's death in their minute book, the ministers "express their sense of his distinguished excellencies as a Christian and a Christian pastor," and "hope they shall never forget his kindness and candour to them personally, his faith which wrought by love to God and man, and his fervent and persevering, his well-regulated and well-directed zeal."—The chapel is surrounded by a well-kept burial ground and

close to the gates stand the parsonage and school house.

REFERENCES.

MS. "History of Cradley Presbyterian Church," Rev. James Scott, 1800. (*N.B.—This extremely valuable volume, enriched with drawings, engravings, and portraits, is in the custody of the minister for the time being of the Park Lane Chapel, Netherend, Cradley.*)

MS. "Records of the Presbyterian Church, Stourbridge," 3 vols, William Scott. (*N.B.—The first of these most interesting volumes is in the possession of the minister for the time being of the Presbyterian Congregation, High Street, Stourbridge; the others are in the Vestry cupboard.*)

Monthly Repository, 1817, p. 6.

"Early History of the Presbyterian Congregation, Stourbridge," Part 2, A. W. Worthington, B.A., F.S.S., 1888, pp. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13.

Registers in custody of Registrar General:—

1. Births and Baptisms, 1789-1817.
2. " " 1818-1837.

GEORGE EYRE EVANS,
Whitchurch in Salop.

(Next Month, Walsall—Old Meeting, Stafford Street.)

The Solitary.

AN UNPUBLISHED PARABLE BY THE LATE HARRIET MARTINEAU.

In the early morning, a Solitary went forth on the sea-shore.

The sea was calm, and the beauty of the bright expanse delighted his eye, and the solemn murmur of the waves soothed his soul.

And he mused awhile, and was about to begin his prayer.

But children approached, and as they sported on the sands their cheerful voices met his ear.

And he was vexed that the calm of his thoughts was disturbed, and he frowned on the little ones.

Soon some fishermen approached; and they cast their nets into a skiff which was on the beach, and committed it to the deep. And the wife of one of them was there; and the Solitary heard her thank God that the sky was clear and the ocean calm. But again he was vexed that he was not alone.

Soon he beheld a busy scene. The boatmen returned from their night voyage, and were met with a joyous greeting. Young and old also came forth to enjoy the freshness of the morning. Sea-birds spread their long pinions, and rose and fell on the surface of the waters.

Then the Solitary said, "I cannot worship here, where I love to behold the waves advancing to my feet; I will go higher, where all is still.

He climbed a cliff which rose from the beach, and there he found an open down where the turf was soft and green. The blue sea spread a wider expanse before him. The small boats were cradled on the deep beneath, and fleets pursued heir course along the horizon.

The Solitary composed his thoughts to prayer. But soon music fell on his ear. To him it was harsh, for he wished for silence. Then he turned, and beheld a shepherd leading forth his flock.

And the face of the shepherd was marked with thought, and a mild light beamed from his eye. The music of his pipe also was soft and sweet.

Yet the Solitary looked on him with anger, and arose hastily, and plunged into the depths of a wood which skirted the sunny down.

And he traversed its shades till he came to a quiet nook, where a spring burst forth from the thicket, and the closely-woven boughs shut out the sunshine.

"I can see no more the spreading main," said he to himself," but here I can be at peace. No eye followeth me here, and no cup is dipped in this spring."

He drank thereof, and his soul was once more hushed to stillness.

But after a while the breeze brought a sweeter music than the rustling of the boughs or the splashing of the spring.

Infant voices were chanting near. The song of their praise was sweet, and the words thereof were holy.

The Solitary left his covert, and beheld a cottage which the thicket had hidden from him. It stood on a sloping grass-plat. It was open to the heavens. The sun shone on its humble roof, and the ivy twined around tossed its branches in the breeze.

An aged woman sat on the bench beside the door, and around her were little children gathered.

She had read to them the words of life; but her feeble voice was not heard afar off. She taught them to sing hymns; and their praises were holy as the Hermit's prayer. But his soul was not as a little child's, and he could not bend to listen.

And the aged woman rose up, and the children besought his blessing. But he hardened his heart, and yet again hastened away.

A rock towered high above the wood. The ascent thereof was steep, and the path rugged. But wrath glowed in the breast of the Solitary, and impelled his steps.

He paused not till he reached the summit, and planted his foot where the step of man had never before trod.

There again he beheld the sea spreading farther than eye could reach. The roar of its waves ascended not so high. The ships appeared to be motionless on its bosom; and the small boats were no longer seen.

Then the holy man exclaimed with joy, "Now at length I am alone!"

But, as he spoke, a living cry arose. He turned, and behold! the nest of an eagle. And the flapping of wings was heard.

The young eagles arose at the approach of their parent: and she fed them from her beak.

Then the Hermit saw how she spread her wings, and bore her young thereon, and flew gently a short flight, and returned again that they might not be weary.

And the Solitary looked down abashed and sighed.

And a still small voice whispered within his breast, "Behold! in all the universe of God praise aboundeth unto Him; and is Thy worship so pure that none other may mingle therewith? Lo! the eagle hath wings that bear her up to the gate of heaven. She can battle with the storms of the sky; she can gaze on the noonday brightness of the sun, for her eye shrinketh not, nor is weary. Yet she heareth the cry of her little ones, and beareth with their weakness till they can soar with her on high. Therein is her wisdom greater, and her heart more expanded than thine."

The Brook.

The little noisy brook that hurries along through our meadows is the sum of many laws unseen, immutable since time began. It is the mist of the sea returning to the sea again. Its existence is due to the same laws that control the great rivers. It may deviate, it may be seemingly diffused in lesser aims, it may be almost lost to sight; but further on we find it re-enforced, gathered back to itself, and, true to the law of its being, bounding onward to the ocean. All natures cannot be like the great rivers, conceiving from the start their high purpose and maintaining it, but some must be like the lesser streams with channels not so large and with strength of less degree. Sometimes these little streams, whose forces are limited, are easily choked by impediments, and impurities, and flow back upon themselves to become stagnant, and loathsome to our senses; but give them a little help, clear their channels, and how quickly they move onward and in their running purify themselves!

The little stream may not in its life seem to help toward any great ends, indeed may not be even visible to many; yet it is ever true to its laws, and even the vapours that rise from it, finer than eye can see, fall on distant parched grounds, like a benediction. And somehow, somewhere, the brook as well as the river finds its right outlet—comes at last to the great sea.

An ounce of cheerfulness is worth a pound of sadness to serve God with.—*Fuller.*

Have a *purpose*. A worthy purpose will speedily free the mind and spirit of the mumps and measles, dyspepsia, and languor.—*P. S. Loyd.*

Many in this world run after felicity like an absent man hunting for his hat, while all the time it is on his head or in his hand.—*Sydney Smith.*

I am only one, but I *am* one;
I cannot do everything, but I *can* do something;
And what I *can* do, by the grace of God I *will do.*

A String of Seed Pearls.

FROM STOPFORD BROOKE'S "SHORT SERMONS."

Why do we live? We live, that through us a particular phase of God's Thought may be known to the world, and this phase of God's Thought in each of us is our real being.

The law of love is an infinite measure. There is no one who can say, "I have done enough for my brother-men. I have loved enough." Beyond our most eager effort stretches the ever-expanding loving-kindness of Jesus.

Love loves love.

Your power to solve the smallest problem of love insures your ability to solve the deepest difficulties. The same love that gave up rest to feed the multitudes, died for love and truth on Calvary. The same love which binds a dew-drop into a sphere, binds the planets into spheres. There is no small or great to love.

Love sees a hundred things in men that knowledge and coldness of heart is blind to.

We are salted with difficulty that we may be the veterans of Heaven. We learn in sorrow that we teach in song; we bear the storm that we may be wrought into mighty trees, under whose branches men may find shelter.

Feebleness is never beautiful. The real beauty of life is in health of mind, strength of will, vigour of purpose.

Never man spoke like this man! Why? Because never man acted like this man; not a word was spoken which had not already been put into action.

It is very ugly to claim gratitude. It proves that we are thinking more of our own goodness in giving than of giving because we love.

Of all sins, to despair of one's self, and to despair of God is the worst.

What love's finger touches it transmutes into gold. Wherever he dwells he makes his dwell-place into the palace of God.

We flatter ourselves that if a great forgiveness were needed we could give it. But this divine nobleness of heart is not gained at a leap in a moment, nor by those who cherish pride, scorn, and resentment in their hearts. It is the last product of a long faithfulness to love in common life. He who cannot forgive a small injury, who cherishes anger for little things, who will not forgive a slight sarcasm in home or social life, will inevitably fail when a great forgiveness is needed.

It is impossible to say that the dead have no influence on our lives. They touch us from the Past. Their "living soul is flashed on ours." We walk through life like men who make their way through an Alpine valley, dark below, but from the upper edge of whose precipices sweeps back an upland country bathed in light. Thence come to us, walking far beneath, the whispers of the upper hills, sweet waters that fall down and carry with them flowers unknown below; and through the serried pines, sometimes the flashing of a light unspeakable. For so to us arrive at hours, when the soul is intent, the mystic tints, the rare voices, the inspiration whence we know not, of that vast world of souls beyond, of the great and good made perfect

They say a battle-light shone round the heads of the old Norse heroes, so much did they love to fight. And it is no mere dream that a spirit of joyful life and power shines upon his countenance who is manful in the glorious battle of God and the human soul against the armies of evil.

No race that had not suffered and sinned could have produced the history of Athens or Rome, the work of Phidias, of Bellini, of Homer, of Shakespeare, or Beethoven. Where would *Hamlet* be, or where Othello? Scarcely a single lyric that has ever been written could have been produced by a race which had not suffered and sinned.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Finger-Marks.

One of the commonest doings of a child is to leave the marks of its dirty or buttered fingers on the edge of the picture book which it handles. Parents have often been vexed at this untidiness; and the little transgressor has been scolded for it. But these finger marks are characteristic in more ways than one. They show not only the carelessness of a child, a quality which it shares with a great many children, but also the child's own peculiar personality. If you examine one of these finger marks carefully, you will find that it is made up of a number of fine roundish lines, which proceed, like the ripples of a pool, from a central point. If you look at the under surface of your own finger tips, you will notice that the skin is marked with thin furrows and ridges, arranged in a very distinct and regular order, one round the other, from the first joint to the top. It is these ridges and furrows that make, when the finger tips are covered with grease and dirt, the objectionable mark, like the lines of an engraving on the leaves of a book. Now the remarkable thing is that the pattern of the finger mark is not the same in every case. It differs in different persons so much that it has been proposed to make use of it as a means of finding out who people are. The thumb mark in wax has often served the purpose of a seal to attest a deed. And Sir William J. Herschel, when he was filling the part of a magistrate in the Indian Civil Service used to insist upon persons putting their thumbs beside their signatures on wills and other legal papers conveying property; and he found it to be most successful in detecting impostors who pretended that they were the owners, and in preventing disputes about the genuineness of the papers. In China the method has been employed from a very ancient time to identify prisoners. When Mr. Thompson, the leader of the American Geological Survey, was working among the Indians, he paid those whom he employed by orders upon the nearest bank, which were marked with the impression of his thumb, and looked like the scroll of fine lines which you see on a blank cheque. He wrote his name and the amount of the order across the thumb mark; and that mark was so peculiar and so well-known that it was impossible to change the figures written on it without being found out. The finger-marks of the same person remain very nearly unchanged throughout life. Sir William Herschel made impressions of the two first fingers of his hand, and then twenty-eight years afterwards he made other impressions of the same fingers; and he found that though there was some little difference arising from the effects of age, and of wear and tear upon the skin, the peculiarity of the finger-mark was retained in all its essential integrity. The child's finger-marks differ so little from those of the full grown man, and are so characteristic, so peculiar to the person, that at every stage of life you could find out his identity by it. I have drawn attention to this striking fact, to show that you could be known, not by the large well-known features of your face only, but even by such small and usually unheeded points as the lines on your finger tips. God has made every part of your body so different from that of every other person, that even by the markings in the iris of your eyes, the branching of the veins on your skin, or the impression of your finger-tips, you could be identified, though you were as like someone else as twins are said to be.

HUGH MACMILLAN.

Children on the Shore.

We are building little homes on the sands,
  We are making little rooms very gay,
We are busy with our hearts and our hands,
  We are sorry that the time flits away.
Oh, why are the minutes in such haste?
  Oh, why won't they leave us to our play?
Our lessons and our meals are such waste!
  We can dine very well another day.

We do not mind the tide coming in,—
  We can dig it a cunning little bed,
Or leave our pretty house and begin
  Another pretty house in its stead;
We do not mind the sun in our eyes,
  When it makes such a dazzle of the world,
That we cannot tell the sea from the skies,
  Nor look where the flying drops are hurl'd.

The shells that we gather are so fair,
  The birds and the clouds are so kind,
And the wind is so merry with our hair,—
  It is only the people that we mind!
Papa, if you come so very near,
  We can't build the library to-day;
We think you are tired of being here,
  And, perhaps, you would like to go away.

There are just one or two we won't refuse,
  If they come by, to help us now and then;
But we want only friends to be of use,
  And not all those idle grown-up men;
Perhaps, if we hurry very much,
  And don't lose an instant of the day,
There'll be time for the last lovely touch,
  Before the sea sweeps it all away.

Oh, children—thus working with the heart!
  There's nothing so terrible as rest;
Plan only how all may take a part:
  It's easy for each to do his best.
The sea, sweeping up at set of sun,
  Can never make your toil be in vain;
It covers the things that you have done,
  But the joy of the doing shall remain.

The Present Moment.

What will it count for you there,
The song that is only begun,
Though the fragment ring sweet in the air?
Or the task that is but half done?
No might-have-been can you lay
At the feet of the Father of Life.
What *is*, is what lasts for aye,
What's done counts alone in the strife.

"What the hand findeth to do,"
Nor this or that greater task.
Take what is portioned to you,
Dare for no other to ask.
This is the secret of life,
Life that hastes, now, to its end:
Work! With night ceases the strife;
No time, then, to mar or to mend.

O, doubt not, elsewhere, exists
The world that rights this world at last.
But we're *here* in earth's fogs and mists,
Can see neither future nor past.
Yet be the hours many or few
One slogan is ours for the fight:
"What the hand findeth to do
That shall you do, with your might!"

Where shall you find me a power
To call back the moment once past?
Now is the day and the hour:
Toil, then, as this were the last;
For what shall it count for you there,
When your works to the Master are brought,
The fragment of song in the air,
The task that is only half wrought?

ALICE WILLIAMS BROTHERTON.

"UNFAILING GOODNESS AND MERCY," and other sermons by Rev. J. Kirk Pike (Belfast, Marcus Ward and Co.) This little volume is published to commemorate a three years' ministry at Belfast. Those who had the pleasure of hearing them when first delivered will cherish them in a more permanent form. They abound in a sweet, gentle piety, which will make them welcome to a wider public than that for which they were first intended. Mr. Pike belongs to the right wing of Unitarianism, and these sermons, delivered in Belfast, are more orthodox than those we are accustomed to hear from our English pulpits. To some, however, this will be a distinct recommendation.

News from the Field.

BIRMINGHAM: CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH.—The Rev. L. P. Jacks, M.A., of Renshaw Street Chapel, Liverpool, has accepted the cordial invitation he has received to succeed Dr. Crosskey, and will commence duty in October.

LYE.—A course of Sunday evening doctrinal lectures, seven in number, has been delivered here during the last few weeks. Those taking part include the Revs. A. E. O'Connor, J. Harrison, P. Dean, A. H. Shelley, E. D. Priestley Evans, and the minister, the Rev. I. Wrigley. Owing to illness the Rev. A. W. Timmis was unable to give his lecture in person, but the discourse he had prepared was read to the congregation. The congregations were exceedingly good, the chapel being full every Sunday evening. Several strangers also attended. The Mutual Improvement Class at its last meeting discussed one of Whittier's poems. The usual classes for recreation and for reading have been held during the winter.

WOLVERHAMPTON.—A sale of work was held on Tuesday, March 6th, with the object of raising a fund to purchase an iron building, costing about £140, to be placed at the back of the church, to provide a room for Sunday School work and for the social purposes of the church. At present there is no Sunday school accommodation, and week-evening meetings and classes are held in a hired room in the district. Another purpose of the sale of work was to provide funds for the repair of the organ. An excellent display of goods provided by members and friends of the congregation occupied the stalls, and numerous articles of interest, scientific instruments, &c., were also exhibited. The following ladies took charge of the stalls:—Mrs. Harris Crook, Mrs. Bowkley, Mrs. Ling, Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Brindley, Mrs. Mackay, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Fullwood, Mrs. Alfred Fellows; Miss Ada Hughes, Miss Hughes, Miss Kertland, Miss Ricket; Messrs. Burgess, Gibbs, Mackay, and Blackshaw. The opening ceremony was conducted by Mr. Charles Harding, of Birmingham, and the attendance included Revs. J. Wood (Birmingham, President of the Midland Christian Union), L. G. Harris Crook (Wolverhampton), A. H. Shelley (Dudley), and H. Eachus (Coseley); Messrs. A. W. Worthington, J.P., C.C., (Stourbridge), H. E. Perry; Dr. S. P. Eagleton, H. Brindley; Miss Fellows, Mrs. and Miss Whitehouse, and others.—Mr. Harding expressed the sympathy of the members of the denomination throughout the district with the Wolverhampton congregation in their efforts to promote their work. It was desired first to provide a building of corrugated iron, but ultimately a more substantial and permanent structure.—The Rev. Joseph Wood also spoke.—Mr. Harding having declared the sale open, a vote of thanks was accorded him on the proposition of Mr. H. E. Perry, seconded by Mr. Brindley.

YORK: ST. SAVIOUR'S GATE CHAPEL.—The Rev. W. Mellor has received and accepted an invitation to the Church at York.

Midland Church Calendar for April.

ALCESTER: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. John Dale, Salford House. Service at 3 p.m.

ATHERSTONE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, of Tamworth. Service at 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street,
Minister: Rev. James Crossley, 5, Wyndham Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 160, Pershore Road. Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Great Brook Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, 18, South Road, Handsworth. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: Rev. J. C. Street, Bristol Road, Edgbaston. Services: 1 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: Small Heath, Little Green Lane Board School.
Service at 6-30 p.m.

BANBURY: Christchurch Chapel, Horse Fair.
Minister: Rev. H. Hill, 5, Crouch Street. Service: Evening. 6-30.

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. E. O'Connor. Services 11 and 6-30.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. A. H. Shelley. Services: 11 and 6-30.

EVESHAM: Oak Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Rudolf Dories. Services: 11 and 6-30.

KIDDERMINSTER:
Minister: Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services: 10-30 and 6-30.

KINGSWOOD: Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister: Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services: 11 and 6-30.

LOUGHBOROUGH: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. H. Haycock, Beacon Road. Services: 10-45 and 6-30.

OLDBURY: Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services: 11 and 6-30.

SHREWSBURY: High Street Church.
Minister: Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services: 11 and 6-30.

STOURBRIDGE: Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services: 11 and 6-30.

TAMWORTH: Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldergate. Services: 11 and 6-30.

THE LYE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. I. Wrigley, B.A. Service: 6-30.

WALSALL. Unitarian Free Church.
Minister: Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services: 11-15 and 6-30.

WEST BROMWICH: Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister: Rev. John Harrison Jesson Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.

WHITCHURCH: Church of the Saviour, Highgate.
Minister: Rev. George Eyre Evans, 5, Mill Street. Services: 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister: Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.